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Labor INFORMATION BULLETIN

JULY 1943

President Pays Tribute to Women Workers

President Roosevelt paid tribute to the millions of American women engaged in war production and at work in men's places on civilian jobs in the following message dated July 7, to Secretary of Labor Perkins in connection with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Women's Bureau in the United States Department of Labor.

Dear Madam Secretary:

The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor will be twenty-five years old tomorrow and it is altogether fitting that its many accomplishments over the years be told tonight. The Bureau is to be congratulated on the work it did in the first World War and on the work it is doing now in the interest of women workers all over the United States.

I am informed that approximately 16,000,000 American women are now working, more than 2,000,000 of them being engaged in producing the munitions with which the United Nations are steadily beating down the Axis. More and more of our women, in the months to come, will go into munition plants, into aircraft factories, into shipyards, and into the other industries making actual equipment for our soldiers, sailors, and marines or into plants servicing our armed forces.

They are doing a grand job, all of them. Working under what are new conditions, for most of them, they are showing the skill and efficiency which make for high production. We owe them and their sisters, who are taking the places of men in many drudging civilian jobs, a great debt and I join with Americans here and those on fighting fronts all over the world in acknowledging it upon an occasion such as the anniversary of the Government agency which is so much concerned with their welfare.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary

Munition Plants Need 1,600,000 Additional Workers

The War Manpower Commission reports that a minimum of 3,600,000 persons must be added to the armed forces and munitions industries during the 1-year period from July 1943 to July 1944 as follows:

	July 1943	July 1944	Net additions
		(Millions)	
Armed forces	9. 3	11. 3	2. 0
Munitions industries	10. 0	11. 6	1. 6
Total	19. 3	22. 9	3. 6

The increase of 2,000,000 in the net strength of the armed forces includes official estimates, as presented in appropriations hearings, to expand the military services by 400,000 above the now authorized level of 10,900,000. It does not take account of the number of men who will have to be withdrawn from the civilian population, for replacements, if the net strength of the armed forces is maintained at 11,300,000. In this sense, the above requirements must be viewed as a minimum estimate.

The estimated increase of 1,600,000 workers in the munitions industries—which include the metal-using industries, metal mining, and selected chemicals and rubber industries—is based on a realistic program of munitions production and war construction for the period July 1943 to July 1944. The production rate assumed for July 1944 is virtually identical with the rate implied in the current official schedule of the War Production Board, but was obtained as a result of three changes in that schedule.

These changes, which were concurred in by the War Production Board, are: (1) Certain program components not now completely scheduled were increased to allow for known expansion of program. (2) Known cut-backs in program were taken into account in reducing certain components. (3) The monthly forecast of munitions output was revised to bring the early months of the fiscal year into line with the current level of output. It is believed, therefore, that the munitions production program underlying the labor requirements estimates represents a realistic approximation of military production needs.

Both changes in productivity and in average weekly hours have been assumed in the estimates of labor requirements. An increase of 10 percent in munitions output per man-hour for the calendar year 1943 was assumed and a further increase at the rate of 4 percent per year to July 1944. An increase in the workweek from an average of 46.9 hours to 48 hours per week was also assumed.

In industries predominantly serving our civilian economy, increased needs for workers in some industries will be more than offset by declines in others during the coming fiscal year. As a result of existing restrictions upon civilian production arising from facilities and raw materials limitations, employment in the nonmunitions industries is expected to decline by about two and one-quarter million from July 1943 to July 1944. This represents a decrease in employment of about 7 percent in the coming year to a level approximately 13 percent below July 1942.

The net effect of such change in civilian employment in conjunction with the changes in munitions employment and the armed forces is shown in the following table:

	July 1943	July 1944
	Millions	*Millions*
Armed forces	9. 3	11. 3
Munitions industries [1]	10. 0	11. 6
Other nonagricultural industries	32. 3	30. 0
Agriculture	12. 0	12. 0
Total employed and Armed Forces	63. 6	64. 9
Unemployed	1. 0	1. 0
Total manpower requirements	64. 6	65. 9

[1] Includes all metal-using industries, metal mining, selected chemicals and rubber industries.

In the above estimates, labor requirements are expected to remain virtually unchanged in agriculture, in the food industries, and in textiles, clothing, and leather products. Despite prospects for increased agricultural production in the summer of 1944, the present estimates assume that no additional manpower will be required in July 1944 over the 12,000,000 estimated for the coming July. A net increase of 100,000 workers in food manufacturing is indicated from July 1943 to July 1944, in view of reduced crop prospects this

year, and the program of expanded farm output next year. Because there is no reason to anticipate any reduction in the combined civilian and military needs for clothing, textiles, and shoes the present estimates show no change in the level of employment for this group of industries.

The decreases in employment in the predominantly civilian areas of the economy will be concentrated largely in trade and services, in construction and building materials, and to some extent in a miscellaneous group of manufacturing industries and nonwar governmental agencies.

Labor requirements in the trade and service industries are expected to decline by about 700,000 as a result of a diminished flow of manufactured consumer goods and a substantial depletion of inventories which, to date, has cushioned the decline in this field of employment. While urgent nonconstruction requirements continue to call for large volumes of lumber and wood products, the curtailment in the wartime construction program will cut labor requirements in the construction and building materials industries by about 600,000.

The sources of labor supply for meeting the estimated minimum additional labor requirements from July 1943 to July 1944 may be summarized as follows:

	Million
Transfers from other industries	2.3
Decreases in unemployment	.0
Net increase in labor force	1.3
Total requirements and supply	3.6

As indicated above, the net decline in employment in industries other than the munitions industries may approximate 2,300,000 workers in the coming fiscal year. These workers will be available to meet the expanding manpower needs of the armed forces and the munitions industries, either directly or by replacing other workers. The large number of construction workers who will be released by the general decline in construction requirements represent the largest single group of workers who can be readily absorbed in the munitions industries.

With the reservoir of unemployed already down to approximately 1,000,000 persons, the unemployed can no longer be considered as a source for meeting the expanding labor needs of the war economy. Because of between-job shifts resulting from changes in production requirements and other causes, it is assumed that 1,000,000 represents the approximate minimum level of unemployment.

If 2,300,000 persons can be drawn from nonagricultural industries other than munitions for the armed forces and the munitions industries, as indicated above, it will be necessary to effect a net increase of 1,300,000 in the labor force.

Possibly one-half or about 700,000 of this increase will be provided by the normal increment to the labor force resulting from population growth. The remaining one-half must be comprised of persons who would not normally be in the labor force—some of whom may be persons who postpone their retirement.

"The foregoing analysis shows that a total of 3.6 million additional persons must be added to employment in the munitions industries and to the armed forces from July 1943 to July 1944," the War Manpower Commission reports. "Moreover, this must be accomplished despite the greatest stringency in the manpower market yet faced by the Nation. Previously we have been able to draw heavily upon reserves of unemployed who could be readily absorbed into employment in areas near their homes. In the coming year, with no reserve of available unemployed, we face an intensive task of transferring workers from industry to the armed forces, from industry to industry, and from area to area.

"A manpower program to meet next year's problem must emphasize intensive and selective measures. Full utilization of workers and elimination of labor hoarding have been assumed in the estimates; if these objectives are not achieved, the labor need will be increased. Replacement of younger industrial workers entering the armed forces requires an intensification of training and upgrading activities on a broad scale. Turnover must be kept at a minimum in order to avoid loss of time and efficiency.

"Intensive recruitment measures are necessary to assure full utilization of women, negroes, and other available labor reserves in shortage areas. While transfer of workers from area to area should be made only after full utilization or local reserves, such transfers will be required in many areas. In such cases, every effort should be made to transfer as much production as possible out of areas to which it is necessary to transfer workers. The stringency of the present manpower situation requires that these objectives be attained with a minimum of disruption in employment and production. Positive measures are required to reduce undesirable migration, to channel hiring, to train workers, and to improve utilization of the present labor force."

Difficult Working Conditions Are Factors in Absenteeism

Absence rates in war-important plants employing more than 3½ million wage earners averaged 6.2 percent in May, the same as the rate for April but below the average of 6.6 percent for March, according to the monthly survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Individual manufacturing industries showed divergent movements", the preliminary report based on returns in May from 3,600 establishments said. "The greatest improvements in absence rates was reported in the manufacture of fire-control equipment and instruments and optical goods; the greatest increase occurred in the manufacture of engines other than aero-engines. Increases were also reported by the shipbuilding and airframe industries.

"In anthracite and bituminous coal mines, rates had increased substantially from March to April, presumably because of unsettled conditions in these industries. In May, however, rates during the report week returned approximately to the March levels. Rates in metal mining remained at about the same level as for most manufacturing industries."

The rates reported are based on whole-day or whole-shift absences on scheduled work days, whether excused or unexcused. Time lost because of strikes is covered in another series of reports by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and is not reported as an absence from scheduled work. When interpreting the rates, it may be helpful to note that an absence of 1 day each month, or 12 days per year, is equivalent to a 4 percent absence rate for an employee scheduled to work 300 days per year.

As in previous months, the lowest rates were reported by the long-established, continuous-process industries, such as petroleum refining and blast furnaces, steel works and rolling mills, where relatively short hours of work are still common. The highest rates were found in the industries where hours are long, where working conditions are difficult, or where the labor force has been greatly expanded because of war-time needs. Shipyards, airframe plants, and steel foundries are examples of this class. On the other hand, some industries even under these conditions reported less than the average number of absences, notably the machine tool industry.

Work Shoes Fill Health and Safety Need

In industry the millions of women producing war material include many thousands who have been housewives and are not used to the speed, noise, constant standing, and accident hazards presented in the factory. Attention to proper footwear for these women is most important.

No item of clothing has more to do with the safety, comfort, efficiency, productivity, and general health of workers than the shoes they wear. It is a matter of common knowledge that women suffer from many foot ailments. Among 1,000 cases seen in a foot clinic there were 15 times as many females as males. Abnormalities of the forefoot were most common. Flat feet, severe corns, ingrowing nails, arthritis were among the disabling conditions found.

It has long been noted that working women constitute the most improperly shod group in America when they are on the job, and women's work shoes have been, until very recently, the most neglected type of footwear in the country. The needs of wartime industry have focused more attention on work shoes than before. The American Standards Association has prepared standards of construction and specifications for a number of types of protective footwear for women as well as for men. The shoe and leather weekly, Hide and Leather and Shoes, conducted a study over a long period covering many phases of the situation affecting women's work shoes. The report included consumer attitudes and needs as well as the shoe-industry problems; it found what work shoes women need to be effective producers of food on farms, of war material in factories, of ships in the Nation's shipyards.

Open toes and backs, high heels, flimsy materials, shoddy construction all endanger the foot and bodily safety of the wearer. Injured feet can almost always be prevented by the wearing of proper, safe shoes. Bodily injury can often be prevented by the same precaution. Foot and body fatigue is in many cases traceable to the wearing of improper work shoes, and any woman's shoe that does not provide safety is not a suitable

shoe for work wear. Exploitation of flimsy play-shoes for work wear should be stopped. Exploitation of such shoes for wear at work in war industries where foot hazards are greater than normal is nothing short of criminal.

The specifications of a safe work shoe for women cannot be summed up in a single code. The shoe that is entirely safe and satisfactory for one occupational condition may be dangerous for another. Occupational conditions must be studied carefully when recommending any work shoe for women.

In 1 out of 10 occupations a safety-toe shoe (usually fiber or plastic toe box) is essential; in the other 9, shoes with other types of foot protection or safety details are desirable. For many jobs the best shoe is a well-fitted oxford with low, broad heel.

Special features that may be needed in shoes for specific women's occupations include these:

Types of platforms and wedge heels devised to give adequate support without the use of steel shanks and to provide cushioned comfort on cement floors and wood floors. Platforms of felt, cork, composition or new cork compound, covered with leather, to insulate against heat and cold.

Full chrome-tan leathers treated for resistance to oil and damp with oils as used by the Army; all selected for firm yet flexible texture, and finished with coating film of lacquer to prevent penetration by slivers of metal.

Wood soles for work exposing the shoe to acids.

Steel safety toe box for heavier work.

Good Posture Aids Production in War Industries

In a study of women in war industries in New Jersey made by the Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, a principal complaint among the women themselves was the fatigue and backstrain they suffered because of long hours of standing or of sitting on backless stools. Though very few jobs require that the worker stand continuously, in many war plants little consideration has been given to factory seating. Great numbers of women entering industry for the first time must stand throughout their working day.

There is another aspect to factory seating besides the one of relief from standing. Many women's jobs are done at workbenches and require close application and constant sitting. The war plant that provides backless stools of uniform height for its bench assemblers, inspectors, and other seated employees is taking one way of cutting output. Where one girl may be able to place her feet on the floor, another must support her position with feet on the rungs of the stool. After several hours, the rounded backs, the drooping shoulders, testify to the toll taken by fatigue from poor posture.

The war has brought its problems in factory seating as in other fields. The pre-war steel-frame chair necessarily has given place to a wooden chair. Several industrial-seating firms have demonstrated that the wooden substitute can fill all the necessary requirements for a good factory seat. The essentials in good industrial seating are:

The seat should be adjustable to the height of the machine or bench. The operator's elbows should be at the same distance from the floor whether sitting or standing. The workbench must not interfere with the operator's knees. The seat should be 16 to 16½ inches wide and slightly saddle-shaped.

The seat should not be too deep. The depth should be sufficient for comfort without constricting blood vessels under the knees. From 12½ to 13½ inches from front to back is adequate.

The back of the seat should support the lumbar region—i. e., the small of the back where fatigue first is noticeable. The back of the seat should be adjustable to the individual.

Footrests with a firm nonslip surface should be provided.

Seats that can be easily moved out of the way when the worker stands are desirable.

Good seating has proved an efficient method of increasing production among both men and women. For several reasons it is especially important to the health of women. Continued standing, or sitting in a slouched position that crowds the abdominal organs, will aggravate menstrual pain. A recent study shows too that women who stand are much more prone than men are to varicose veins; the study found a great excess in the proportion of women with varicose veins even when only women who had never been pregnant were considered.

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Women Are Replacing Men in Office Positions

Military service has claimed large numbers of men who in peacetime were part of this country's vast army of office workers. Others have left their offices to enter essential industry or agriculture. The process of filling their places, and, in many instances, at the same time expanding office personnel to keep pace with war demands, has necessitated marked adjustments in the recruitment and training of office workers.

With this in mind, in the fall of 1942 the Women's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor made a resurvey in the Kansas City area of a sample of the firms scheduled by Bureau agents at approximately the same date in 1940[1] and made first visits to a number of plants in other cities in the same region, chiefly St. Louis. In both cases the businesses scheduled, with the exception of printing and publishing, were in nonmanufacturing, ranking according to total number of office employees in 1942 as follows: Public utilities, banks, wholesale distributors, printing and publishing, insurance, mail-order and national chain stores, and department and apparel stores.

The 36 offices revisited in the Kansas City area (1 of which made no report on employment in 1942) employed in 1940 more that half (6,164) of the 12,000 persons scheduled at that time though constituting less than a fifth of the 192 firms surveyed. Twenty-seven offices were visited in the other cities.

The return visits to firms in the Kansas City area disclosed an increase of 20 percent in number of office employees since the survey of 1940. In this expansion in total office force, women's employment had risen by practically 40 percent, men's had declined by 2 percent. The numbers of women in banks and in the offices of air transportation companies had considerably more than doubled.

In other areas the total increase was small—less than 3½ percent. Women's employment had risen by 27 percent, men's had declined by 14 percent. Though women in banks had more than doubled in number, women's employment in all other types of office had increased by less than 30 percent.

Combined, the data show that about three in every five of the offices visited had more employees in October 1942 than in October 1940, but that in two-thirds of the offices the number of men had decreased. Women's employment had increased in all but one (newspapers) of the types of office visited, and in two industries, banks and air transportation, the number of women had more than doubled. Taking all the firms together women's employment had increased by almost a third, men's had decreased by a tenth.

Air and rail transportation and banks had been especially affected by the increased load imposed on most services in wartime. Of all the types of office visited, these showed the largest proportions of increase in total personnel in the 2-year period; the rise amounted to almost four-fifths in air transportation, one-third in railroads, and one-fourth in banks. The last named reflected the increased amount of paper work resulting from the sale of bonds, large war-plant pay rolls, and more frequent deposits due to higher earnings. The tremendous task of transporting military and industrial freight and troops had expanded and complicated the record-keeping in railroad and air transportation. These 3 kinds of office, along with insurance, also showed the largest percent increase of women in the 2 years; it was highest in air transportation (172) and banks (133), followed by railroads and insurance (respectively 44 and 38).

Railroads took on many women during the First World War, a number of whom remained and comprise part of the present personnel. There was little increase in women's employment between that war and this. Now again large numbers of women are being employed. Between 1940 and early 1943 the number and proportion of women in clerical occupations in class I railroads throughout the country increased considerably. In five occupational groups claiming most of the office workers, proportion of women employed rose from less than a fourth in 1940 to practically a third in January 1943. Whereas the total number in these jobs increased by only about 17½ percent, the number of women increased by 3½ times as much, or 61½ percent.

Though practically every type of office represented in the resurvey by the Women's Bureau had a greater number of women in 1942 than in 1940, total office personnel actually dropped in several, including newspapers, gas, water, and electric-light companies, department and apparel stores, and bus and streetcar transportation. In some cases, however, the remaining personnel were handling an increased load. The fact is that in most of the companies surveyed business was better in the fall of 1942 than in 1940. Forty-four of the sixty-three offices, or about 7 in every 10, reported increased business operations.

[1] *For a definition of "office worker" and results of the previous survey, see Bull. No. 188-3 of the Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor,* Office Work in Kansas City: 1940. *Washington, 1942 74 pp.*

Number of offices scheduled in 1942 and numbers of men and women they employed in 1940 and in 1942, by type of office

Type of office	Number of offices scheduled in 1942	Number of employees								Percent of increase (+) or decrease (−) in employment		
		October 1940				October 1942						
		Total	Men	Women		Total	Men	Women		Total	Men	Women
				Number	Percent of total			Number	Percent of total			
All types	[1] 63	**15,065**	**8,010**	**7,055**	**46.8**	**16,574**	**7,234**	**9,340**	**56.4**	**+10.0**	**−9.7**	**+32.4**
Banks	10	3,148	2,161	987	31.4	3,942	1,645	2,297	58.3	+25.2	−23.9	+132.7
Insurance	7	1,511	666	845	55.9	1,650	486	1,164	70.5	+9.2	−27.0	+37.8
Public utilities	13	4,358	2,952	1,406	32.3	4,984	3,110	1,874	37.6	+14.4	+5.4	+33.3
Railroad transportation	5	1,400	1,146	254	18.1	1,845	1,480	365	19.8	+31.8	+29.1	+43.7
Gas, water, light	4	1,876	1,178	698	37.2	1,846	1,046	800	43.3	−1.6	−11.2	+14.6
Other [2]	4	1,082	628	454	42.0	1,293	584	709	54.8	+19.5	−7.0	+56.2
Printing and publishing	10	1,954	1,249	705	36.1	1,871	1,144	727	38.9	−4.2	−8.4	+3.1
Newspapers	4	1,760	1,124	636	36.1	1,672	1,040	632	37.8	−5.0	−7.5	−.6
Other	6	194	125	69	35.6	199	104	95	47.7	+2.6	−16.8	+37.7
Wholesale distributors	14	2,646	825	1,821	68.8	2,636	736	1,900	72.1	−.4	−10.8	+4.3
Own goods	8	1,435	550	885	61.7	1,425	483	942	66.1	−.7	−12.2	+6.4
Others' goods	6	1,211	275	936	77.3	1,211	253	958	79.1	No change	−8.0	+2.4
Department and apparel stores	5	369	27	342	92.7	364	18	346	95.1	−1.4	−33.3	+1.2
Mail-order and distributing offices, national chain stores	[1] 4	1,079	130	949	88.0	1,127	95	1,032	91.6	+4.4	−26.9	+8.7

[1] Includes 1 company not reporting employment.

[2] Air, bus, and streetcar transportation, and telegraph.

This frequently necessitated an expansion of force at a time when a large proportion of the employable population was entering the armed services or war industry. Though the labor-market reports for the areas visited, each of them an active war center, show an adequate supply of labor to meet the demand for the period November 1942 to November 1943, the assumption is that a maximum of potential women workers ordinarily not in the labor force will enter the market and be absorbed. Offices especially appear to have been responding to the situation by accepting women in increasing numbers.

This trend is illustrated most clearly by analysis of actual vacancies and the way in which they had been filled. A total of 1,281 men's jobs were reported to have become vacant one or more times between 1940 and 1942 in 53 of the offices. Of the 1,224 vacancies filled, 801, or practically two-thirds, were filled by women at the time of survey. These, it should be emphasized, were men's jobs for which women were hired. The banks reported well over two-fifths of the vacancies and with few exceptions they had employed women to fill them. This heavy exodus from banks probably is a direct consequence of the youth of the men employed; it was reported of the 10 banks visited that 499 men on the office staffs left for the armed services between October 1940 and October 1942. These amounted to 23 percent of the men in the offices at the earlier date.

An even greater proportion of men, 26 percent of those employed in October 1940, had entered military service from the insurance offices visited, but women were not employed for so large a proportion of the vacancies—43 percent in insurance offices in contrast to 96 percent in banks. Wholesale distributing and newspaper offices also had lost many men to military service in the 2-year period, about 21½ percent of the October 1940 male force.

Numbers of women hired to fill men's vacancies entered office jobs that no women, or very few, had held before in the companies visited. Therefore not only were more women employed in office jobs they have traditionally held, but women's occupational distribution throughout the office field had become much broader. For example, in the period October 1940 to October 1942 women were employed for the first time as messengers in six companies, as tellers in three, as hand bookkeepers in two, and as supervisors, teletype operators, duplicating-machine operators, tonnage clerks, collectors, and administrative personnel in one each. At time of visit, every bookkeeper in one of the banks scheduled was a woman, yet this is a responsible job more commonly held by men.

Of 17 companies reporting supervisory jobs left by men, 8 filled the jobs entirely with women, and 2 with women as well as men. Women were employed for all the underwriter vacancies reported, and of 3 companies in which men left the job of purchasing agent, 2 hired women and 1 took women as well as men. Women were hired exclusively to fill at least 30 of the jobs that men left, including actuarial, billing, tax, transit, and pay-roll clerks.

On the other hand, it is significant that men only were employed to fill at least 20 jobs, including those of auditor, correspondent, freight clerk, sales analyst, time-study clerk, voucher clerk, and yard clerk. Men were available for such jobs in companies with seniority privileges and where an arrangement existed whereby employees might bid for vacancies that occurred within company offices. The office personnel participated in this in 4 of the 5 railroads visited; 3 of the 4 water, gas, and light companies; and 2 of the 14 wholesale houses.

Through seniority and bidding-in, the firm's own employees become a source of labor supply, particularly of experienced workers. A general shift upward takes place in such companies when a vacancy is filled, very frequently leaving unfilled only the jobs requiring least experience and commanding the lowest salaries. Young women who had never done the work were being employed to fill these.

It follows, therefore, that more inexperienced than experienced women were employed as a result of men's job vacancies; when men were hired, they were more often experienced. Most of the women put in men's jobs who had knowledge of the work were transferred from places within the office. This upgrading has been the practice more generally during the war period than before.

In 7 of each 10 cases reported, women who, at time of survey, were in men's jobs vacated within the 2 years were receiving the same salary as the jobs paid when the men left, or even more. About a fourth were getting more. This is in keeping with the general rise in wage and salary levels that had taken place since the war began. Offices were having to compete with factories and especially war plants for women workers. In view of this it is surprising that of the 63 companies only 29 reported general increases in office salaries, and in some of the 29 not all workers shared equally, or shared at all, in the increase.

Of each type of office visited, few reported a general raise in salary level except the railroads, banks, and wholesale houses. Of the 5 railroads, 4 gave office increases during the 2-year period, as did 5 of the 10 banks and 7 of the 14 wholesale firms. In the offices that supplied sufficient data for computation the increases given ranged from 8 to 30 percent; the usual amount was 12 or 15 percent. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the cost of living in Kansas City and St. Louis increased between December 15, 1940, and November 15, 1942, by between 17 and 19 percent.

Women in their teens and twenties have traditionally been much more in demand than older women for office jobs. There are various reasons for this. For example, a large proportion of the jobs offered women are of a routine nature requiring little or no experience and more suitably filled by young people just beginning. Included among these is the operation of mechanical devices such as the comptometer and the bookkeeping machine. These jobs, demanding speed and dexterity, are handled more easily by the young. In addition, more young women usually are available, since in normal times most women work only before marriage.

But because young womanpower, though not so scarce as manpower, is becoming less plentiful, few of the companies visited stood adamant any longer against the employment of "older" women, usually those over 30. To be sure, a number of the offices made it clear that they would hire such women only if necessary; some, though preferring young people, were already employing women beyond their twenties. What is more, of 37 companies reporting, nearly half had found older women very satisfactory, especially in such jobs as filing; some actually preferred them to young people for most occupations.

Private business schools in the areas where the survey was made were training a much larger proportion of women of 30 or over in the fall of 1942 than is usual in normal times. Further, the schools reported that business offices were not resisting the employment of older women to the same degree as in 1940. One school stated that it was placing women well over 30, though 2 or 3 years earlier such women would not even have been accepted for enrollment because of the difficulty in securing employment for them.

The fact is that the present-day business-school student is more and more the woman who has been out of school for a number of years, has worked some of that time, but more recently has been idle. She may have been employed in an office early in her career but had to accept other work in the depression years. At any rate, she wants to brush up and get into office work now that the demand is great and salaries are more attractive than formerly. In contrast, the young girls enter industry or secure an office position immediately on graduating from high school and in many cases before. Fewer are attending the private business school.

If not for the "older" woman, attendance in the private business school would have suffered an even greater drop than appears to have occurred. The day schools have taken the entire decrease, since, with jobs plentiful, students more frequently worked during the day and attended night school.

After entrance, it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep day-school students in attendance. The turn-over among them was very high, due to the heavy demand for young workers. One school reported 40 requests for workers at time of visit and only 1 student available. Another had a list of 200 openings but no one to fill them. There were waiting lists especially for stenographers, typists, and young machine operators.

Much less efficient girls than formerly could be sent to fill a vacancy and would be accepted. Some of those who left school before completing the course continued their studies at night, but this was by no means true of all. Pupils in the high-school commercial course were being encouraged to take part-time work so that they would not be tempted to leave school before graduation. Practically all the business students in one large high school were working part time in stores and offices. The teachers stated that firms were accepting a far less capable girl than they would have employed before the emergency.

The high schools had made no major changes in their commercial course within the 2-year period. The private business schools, however, had introduced shorter courses or had speeded-up the regular curriculum by urging or insisting that students complete the established course in less time through more concentrated attendance and study. Even with all this, students were leaving to take jobs before their training was complete. One school had increased its enrollment several times by the introduction of a home-study course. The new course obligated the student to come to the school only for review purposes. A large proportion of the home-study pupils had already been placed at time of visit.

Some of the business offices visited were meeting the scarcity of office workers by training women among their own personnel for upgrading. Three of the banks visited were preparing women to fill vacancies left by male tellers. One was training women to enter the bookkeeping department. A mail-order company kept extra women in training to replace the men as they left, and another, having adopted the policy during the emergency of replacing men with women already in the organization, was training women for promotion to men's jobs.

The assumption is, of course, that it is less difficult now to secure workers from the outside for the jobs requiring little or no training than for those demanding some knowledge of the business or a special skill. As a matter of fact, many offices have long preferred to hire young inexperienced workers to start at the bottom as clerks handling routine matters or as machine operators, so that they may be trained from the beginning in the company's methods. It is interesting in this connection, however, that one of the railroad offices visited was accepting women trainees from the outside to learn to take over such responsible jobs, ordinarily held by men, as station clerk, bill clerk, and ticket seller.

If the data collected in this survey are representative, they indicate that more office workers are employed now than in 1940 and fewer are available to fill vacancies. Men are practically impossible to secure, except for the older men who are being upgraded in their own organization; therefore women are entering almost every kind of job in offices, their proportion as well as their total numbers in office work having increased substantially since the war began. The scarcity of available help has led also to somewhat more extensive employment of the older woman, 30 and over, and in general to the acceptance of less efficient and capable personnel. Finally, many of the women taking men's office jobs today are entering at a higher salary than their male predecessors earned at leaving.

Building Construction Continues To Decline

New construction activity in the continental United States which amounted to 4.3 billion dollars in the first 6 months of 1943 is expected to decrease to less than 2.5 billion dollars for the last half of the year. Operating under stringent controls and faced with shortages in many lines of materials the construction industry put in place only 753 million dollars of privately financed work in the first half of the year. Public construction, with the military and naval and industrial facilities programs nearing completion, totalled approximately 3.6 billion dollars in the first 6 months of 1943 and probably will amount to not more than half that much in the remainder of the year.

Private construction continued the decline started in the last half of 1941 and is expected to drop below 700 million in the last half of 1943. Nonfarm residential construction fell to 334 million dollars in the first half of the year and should increase slightly in the last 6 months. Private nonresidential construction of 73 million dollars amounted to less than a fourth of the total for the first half of 1942.

Farm and public utility construction both showed declines as compared with the first half of 1942 although the declines were not so severe as in other types of private construction. Further curtailment of farm and public utility construction in 1943 is not expected to be so great as in other types of private construction.

Expenditures for Federally financed war housing amounted to 375 million dollars in the first half of the year, an increase of 116 percent over the same period last year. A 30 percent decline in war housing expenditures is expected in the last half of the year.

The 1.1 billion dollars of industrial facilities construction was about two-thirds of the total for the first 6 months of 1942 but only slightly more than one-half of expenditures in the last 6 months of the year. This program is nearing completion and expenditures for the remainder of 1943 are forecast at 390 million dollars.

Military and naval construction expenditures of 1.6 billion dollars, although less than half of the total for the last half of 1942, were only slightly below the total for the first half of 1942. Expenditures of slightly more than 700 million dollars are expected on this program in the last 6 months of the year.

Highway construction expenditures of 192 million dollars were about 42 percent less than in the comparable period in 1942 and are expected to decline 4 percent in the last half of the year. Other public construction, including river, harbor, and flood control works, T. V. A. projects, and public-service enterprises such as water and sewage, rapid transit, electric light and power, and pipe lines increased from 172 million dollars in the first half of 1942 to 216 million in the first 6 months of the current year. This rise was largely the result of increased activity in the construction of Federally financed pipe lines.

Estimated New Construction Activity in the Continental United States [1]

[Millions in dollars]

	1943			1942		
	Total	First half [2]	Second half [3]	Total	First half	Second half
Total new construction	6,763	4,309	2,454	13,691	6,024	7,667
Private construction	1,445	753	692	3,123	1,853	1,270
Residential (nonfarm)	674	334	340	1,460	938	522
Nonresidential (includes privately financed war plants)	121	73	48	542	354	188
Farm:						
Residential	90	50	40	185	93	92
Service buildings	160	88	72	315	140	175
Public utility	400	208	192	621	328	293
Public Construction	5,318	3,556	1,762	10,568	4,171	6,397
Residential (includes war housing)	640	375	265	542	174	368
Nonresidential (excludes industrial facilities)	35	17	18	135	89	46
Industrial facilities	1,446	1,056	390	3,602	1,576	2,026
Military and naval	2,356	1,641	715	5,002	1,737	3,325
Highway	372	192	180	664	330	334
Other public:						
Federal [4]	368	216	152	400	172	228
State and local [5]	101	59	42	163	93	70

[1] The estimates include expenditures for new construction in the continental United States. They do not include work relief construction expenditures on maintenance expenditures. The estimates do include expenditures for major additions and alterations.

[2] Preliminary.

[3] Forecast for the last half of the year.

[4] Includes conservation and development, T. V. A., and public pipe line construction expenditures.

[5] Includes water supply, sewage disposal, and miscellaneous public service enterprises.

Employment and Weekly Earnings

The total number of employees in nonagricultural establishments declined almost 150,000 during May to a level of 38,234,000. These figures do not include proprietors of unincorporated businesses, self-employed persons, unpaid family workers, domestics employed in private homes, public-emergency employees, and personnel in the armed forces. This is the first April-to-May decline since 1938 and was the result of decreases in employment in manufacturing, mining, construction, and trade.

MANUFACTURING

The decline of 50,000 wage earners in the nondurable group of manufacturing industries, and the increase of 13,000 in the durable group, resulted in a net decrease of 37,000 wage earners in all manufacturing industries. Further increases in aircraft, aircraft engines, and shipbuilding brought employment in the transportation-equipment group to the highest point on record—2,249,000 wage earners.

Weekly earnings averaged $48.52 in April in the industries of the durable-goods group and $33.50 in the nondurable. Each of these represents an increase of approximately one and a half percent above last month and almost 20 percent above April 1942.

NONMANUFACTURING

Further declines in employment were reported in anthracite- and bituminous-coal mining. Seven thousand fewer wage earners were reported in anthracite mining and 50,000 fewer in bituminous-coal mining than in May 1942. In anthracite mining, weekly earnings averaged $43.22 in April; the corresponding figure for bituminous-coal mining was $41.39.

Estimated number of wage earners and average weekly earnings in manufacturing industries by major industry groups (adjusted to Bureau of Employment Security final data for 1941 and preliminary data for the second quarter of 1942)

Industry group	Estimated number of wage earners (thousands)			Average weekly earnings (dollars)		
	May 1943	April 1943	May 1942	April 1943	March 1943	April 1942
	(*Preliminary*)					
ALL MANUFACTURING	**13,687**	**13,724**	**12,127**	**$42.48**	**$41.75**	**$35.10**
Durable goods	*8,150*	*8,137*	*6,649*	*48.52*	*47.79*	*40.95*
Iron and steel and their products	1,708	1,722	1,579	47.08	46.47	39.44
Electrical machinery	698	695	523	44.79	44.84	40.58
Machinery, except electrical	1,240	1,237	1,058	51.93	51.48	45.90
Transportation equipment, except automobiles	2,249	2,221	1,345	55.88	54.41	50.65
Automobiles	657	653	460	55.77	55.62	51.23
Nonferrous metals and their products	410	411	373	46.91	46.13	38.94
Lumber and timber basic products	474	480	551	30.82	29.68	24.78
Furniture and finished lumber products	357	360	384	32.06	31.39	26.66
Stone, clay, and glass products	357	358	376	35.65	35.02	30.47
Nondurable goods	*5,537*	*5,587*	*5,478*	*33.50*	*33.08*	*28.12*
Textile-mill products and other fiber manufactures	1,239	1,254	1,298	27.55	27.39	23.26
Apparel and other finished textile products	860	889	934	27.10	27.09	23.28
Leather	337	346	381	29.68	29.45	26.37
Food	914	910	906	34.00	33.72	28.89
Tobacco manufactures	91	92	91	24.95	24.05	21.09
Paper and allied products	312	312	320	35.74	35.11	29.98
Printing, publishing, and allied industries	329	330	328	39.20	39.08	36.00
Chemicals and allied products	740	744	588	40.77	40.14	34.98
Products of petroleum and coal	124	123	126	48.01	46.65	39.55
Rubber products	187	186	141	45.05	44.74	35.93
Miscellaneous industries	404	401	365	40.23	39.80	32.96

Estimated number of wage earners and average weekly earnings in selected nonmanufacturing industries

Industry	Estimated number of wage earners (thousands)			Average weekly earnings (dollars)		
	May 1943	April 1943	May 1942	April 1943	March 1943	April 1942
	(*Preliminary*)					
Anthracite mining	72.2	73.5	79.2	$43.22	$43.84	$30.57
Bituminous-coal mining	388	394	438	41.39	43.13	33.46
Metalliferous mining	98.6	99.3	111	42.57	41.61	37.93
Iron	34.1	33.1	31.5	39.15	37.74	36.49
Copper	31.5	32.0	32.5	45.41	44.68	39.88
Lead and zinc	18.9	19.2	19.7	42.66	42.55	38.61
Gold and silver	7.5	8.1	20.9	39.66	40.11	35.86
Miscellaneous	6.6	6.9	6.4	45.62	45.06	38.27
Hotels (including salaried employees)	339	339	337	19.46	19.29	16.91
Power laundries	267	267	268	23.48	22.70	20.59
Dyeing and cleaning	85.1	84.4	85.5	28.87	26.56	24.20

The Cost of Living in May 1943

While the cost of items making up nearly 60 percent of the family budget remained practically unchanged in the month ending May 15, a rise of 1.7 percent in food prices increased the total cost of living for city workers by 0.8 percent. This increase of 0.8 percent compares with a rise of 1.5 percent in the month ending March 15, and 1.1 percent in the month ending April 15.

In mid-May the cost-of-living index stood at 125.1 percent of the 1935–39 average, 7.8 percent above a year ago and 24.1 percent above January 1941, base date for the Little Steel formula. Food prices as a whole averaged 17 percent above last May and 46 percent above January 1941.

Over the month, the largest increases were for fresh fruits and vegetables, which were up 8 percent. Prices of chickens continued to rise, with growing scarcity at the retail level in some cities. Sweetpotatoes increased 40 percent in the period, to three times their price of a year ago.

The rates of change in food prices varied in different parts of the country as new vegetables and fruit crops entered local markets and OPA established flat price ceilings, which vary by cities. Thus, in the case of fresh fruits and vegetables, changes ranged from an average increase of 24 percent in a New England city to a decline of 21 percent in a large Southern city.

The trend in meat prices, as well as for fresh fruits and vegetables, was also divergent sectionally, and showed the first but not the full effect of new OPA dollar-and-cent ceilings which went into effect on May 17. Of the 56 cities included in the survey, 25 cities had lower costs for meat and 30 had higher costs, but full adjustment to the new ceilings had not yet been made in all the stores visited. Some of the changes were substantial and ranged from declines of between 4 and 5 percent in some cities to increases of nearly 6 percent in others. Prices of veal were somewhat lower in most cities. On the other hand, prices of chickens were slightly higher in nearly all areas, reflecting the general scarcity at the retail level. Prices of fresh fish, which have increased very sharply in recent months, declined with an increase in the available supply.

Aside from foods the largest price increases were for beauty- and barber-shop services which continued to advance, and for hospital-room charges which rose in one-third of the cities covered. These advances resulted in an average increase of 0.3 percent in the cost of all miscellaneous goods and services.

Clothing prices were on the average unchanged, but the price of rayon hosiery declined 2.0 percent, as adjustments were made to the new OPA price-quality ceiling which became effective May 15. There were scattered increases for work shirts, wash frocks, and shoe repairs.

Housefurnishings costs increased slightly, 0.1 percent, as the result of higher prices for bedroom suites, rugs and felt-base floor coverings. These advances more than offset lower sale prices for muslin sheets in some cities.

Prices of fuel, electricity, and ice were unchanged in most cities. Higher prices for coal in Milwaukee and Minneapolis in addition to slightly higher prices for fuels in other cities resulted in an 0.1 percent increase in the average cost of the entire group. There was a seasonal reduction in gas rates in New York.

Rent costs have changed very little in large cities since mid-September 1942. In the interest of economy, changes in rents are now surveyed quarterly and were last secured in March.

Cost of Living in 21 Large Cities

Area and City	Index as of May 15, 1943 (1935–39=100)	Percentage change: Apr. 15, 1943, to May 15, 1943	Percentage change: May 15, 1942, to May 15, 1943	Percentage change: Aug. 15, 1939, to May 15, 1943
Average: Large cities	**125.1**	**+.8**	**+7.8**	**+26.9**
North Atlantic:				
Boston	122.2	+.3	+7.8	+25.8
Buffalo	128.8	+1.1	+6.9	+30.8
New York	124.2	+1.1	+9.6	+25.5
Philadelphia	124.7	+.4	+8.7	+27.5
Pittsburgh	124.7	+.9	+7.7	+26.7
South Atlantic:				
Baltimore	128.2	+1.2	+8.5	+29.9
Savannah	131.5	+.4	+8.8	+32.4
Washington, D. C.	123.5	+1.0	+7.7	+25.3
North Central:				
Chicago	124.4	+.8	+6.8	+26.0
Cincinnati	123.6	+.2	+6.6	+27.0
Cleveland	128.0	+1.4	+7.7	+28.0
Detroit	127.2	+1.8	+7.1	+29.1
Kansas City	122.5	+.2	+7.4	+24.2
Minneapolis	121.7	+.7	+5.0	+22.1
St. Louis	124.1	+.7	+7.4	+26.5
South Central:				
Birmingham	125.4	+.1	+5.6	+27.3
Houston	124.0	+.2	+6.7	+23.1
Western:				
Denver	124.4	+1.6	+7.6	+26.2
Los Angeles	125.7	−.1	+6.4	+25.1
San Francisco	128.1	−.3	+8.9	+29.0
Seattle	129.5	+1.3	+6.8	+29.1

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